

OLIVER JONES IN AFRICA

Proposal for a one-hour film

Oliver Jones is emerging as a major figure in the swing tradition of jazz. In December/88 and January/89, he will be leading a group of five Canadian jazz musicians in a tour of West Africa, under the sponsorship of Canada's Department of External Affairs. The other musicians will be Archie Alleyne on drums and Dave Young on double-bass, both from Toronto, and Raneé Lee, vocalist, and Richard Ring on guitar, both from Montreal.

This tour will have a unique character worthy of recording on film. 85% of the slaves from whom the black population of North America is descended came from West Africa. It is the area out of whose minstrel, rhythmic and work-related musical traditions grew the blues in the American south. It is the area where jazz, the descendant of the blues, and rock and roll, the descendant of jazz, have begun to strike roots, thus completing the cycle. The King Sunny Ade band of Nigeria, for example, has gained an international reputation for its mixture of jazz and rock and roll elements with the indigenous ju-ju idiom of West Africa. It has toured Canada.

We believe there is a good film story to be told here. Oscar Peterson has made a brief appearance in Cameroun, but Jones and his group will be the first Canadian jazz ensemble to make an official extended tour of the music capitals of Africa. For Jones, Lee and Alleyne, it will be their first look at the continent of their ancestors. They look forward to learning as much from the musicians there as they have to offer themselves. In Senegal, for example, is a drummer already sought out by other Canadian musicians. His name is Dudu Rose. He has recorded with Quebec singer Diane Dufresne. In Nigeria, Jones will be looking for two women from Montreal that he knows. They are married to Nigerians whom they met when they were posted to Canada.

Jones will be the film's principal character. His homey stage presence has as much to do with the magic effect he has on an audience as the power of his music. Offstage, he likes to develop personal contacts with his fans. The contrast between his tough, working-class, gospel and classical music background in Montreal, and the linguistic, tribal and spiritual functions of music in Africa, can provide a gripping central theme. An equally promising secondary theme could be the impact that African musicians and Dave Young have on each other. Dave, the most original and sought-after double-bass player in the Canadian jazz scene today, comes from the most un-original WASP background, with university training as an investment dealer and with a brief career as principal bass in the symphony orchestras of Edmonton, Hamilton and Winnipeg. On vacation in Jamaica three years ago, he met another trained investment dealer called Barbara Lewis. He found her a job in the financial

district of Bay Street, Toronto, and she will be accompanying him to Africa. For her as for Jones, it will be a dramatic first visit to the continent of her ancestors. In order to convey the full impact of this experience on Jones, Young and Lewis, it may be advisable to shoot short sequences of the three of them in their home environments in Montreal and Toronto as they prepare to leave.

So here is a chance to make a film of value and appeal to both Africans and Canadians, at a time when Canada is emerging as a major western partner in the construction of post-colonial Africa. 40% of Canadian foreign aid is invested in projects in that continent. Canadian corporations like Lavelin and SNC are playing key roles in economic development. Several thousand Africans are enrolled in Canadian universities. And the Canadian government is taking a lead on the economic and diplomatic fronts in the fight against apartheid.

Although the tour will be covering six countries, the film should be shot in just one or two of them, so that African characters can be well established and developed. The country of first choice would be Senegal, which is expected to be hosting a major pan-African arts festival at the time of the Jones tour. This would make it possible to film with African musicians from both French- and English-speaking countries, in order to illustrate the bilingual nature of the Canada-Africa partnership. (Jones, as a native of the St. Henri district of Montreal, is fluent in both languages.) The concert schedule of the full five-piece Jones group may give them insufficient time in Senegal for us to obtain the amount of material needed to construct a one-hour story. In that case, it would be necessary to bring Jones, Young and Lewis back to Senegal and/or Nigeria to do the bulk of the shooting at the end of their concert tour.

In order to produce a shooting script and schedule, the producer and director will need to spend 4 weeks in Africa this spring. Here is a rough estimate of what that would cost. It includes 3 weeks for preparations in Ottawa, Montreal and Toronto, and 3 weeks for completing and circulating the script on return:

Travel, Montreal-Ottawa-Toronto (5 trips at \$200 for two)....	\$2000
Travel, Montreal-Dakar-Lagos (\$3000 air fare for two).....	6000
Hotel, meals and incidental expenses in Dakar and Lagos (\$1000 per week for two for 4 weeks).....	8000
Salaries (\$1000 per week for two for 10 weeks).....	20,000
Consultant fees in Dakar and Lagos.....	2000
Office expenses in Ottawa and Montreal.....	2000
 TOTAL	 \$40,000

Martin Duckworth, director
John Duckworth, producer

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